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ABSTRACT

This survey attempted to examine what happened in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Community school district, New York where there was parent participation, and what the attitudes of parents were towards local control. While the short history of the demonstration project did not allow for a long-term evaluation, the project did fulfill many of the goals of a community school district. The parents developed enough efficacy to participate in and acquire knowledge pertaining to school matters, and had confidence in their educational leaders. [Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.] (Author/DM)

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October 1970 City University of New York

A Survey of Parental Views of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Experiment

by Frances Gottfried

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A SURVEY OF PARENTAL VIEWS OF THE OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE EXPERIMENT

by Frances Gottfried

Frances Gottfried, is a Research Associate at the Institute. She holds a Masters Degree in Political Science. This monograph is to be included in the Institute's three year study of the demonstration districts.

INTRODUCTION

Educational experiments in community control have become a national symbol of reform in urban education. Much has been written by educators pro and con. However, there has been little hard data on how those clients who were the beneficiaries of these experiments regarded it. This paper will begin to examine the attitudes of the parents in Ocean Hill-Brownsville towards their experiment.

The Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration project was one of the three school decentralization experiments (Ocean Hill-Brownsville, I.S. 201, and Two Bridges) created by the New York City Board of Education in July of 1967, in response to the severe educational problems facing these three economically deprived areas. These neighborhoods had seemingly lost confidence in the schools which were failing to educate their children. And while admittedly, most pupils in city schools are behind in their studies, the figures in black ghettos are far more catastrophic. In Ocean Hill-Brownsville, for example, 6,000 of the 8,000 students in the district were three or more years behind in the basic subject skills when the experiment first began.[1]

What the community leaders in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and the other two demonstration projects envisioned was an experiment in community control of the schools in their districts, with the Board of Education delegating authority over personnel, budget, and curriculum to a locally elected school board. The essential elemen in these experiments was to be community participation; the Board of Education suggested that a demonstration district of a small size should "involve representatives of the community, parents, and staff more effectively in the conduct of school programs as well as in new approaches to teacher training and in curriculum development."[2]

Essentially, with the exception of the three demonstration projects in New York City, few large city school systems have attempted to make any meaningful change in the political structure of their educational institutions.[3] Because it challenged that very structure, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district was the object of three consecutive strikes that crippled the New York City schools in the autumn of 1968. In question

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[1] Rhody A. McCoy, "The Formation of a Community-Controlled School District," in *Community Control of Schools*, ed. by Henry M. Levin (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1970), p. 169.
[2] New York City, Board of Education, *Decentralization: Statement of Policy* (April 19, 1967).
[3] Luvern L. Cunningham, "Educational Governance and Policy Making in Large Cities," *Public Administration Review*, XXX (July/August, 1970), 333.

was the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board's power to involuntarily transfer thirteen teachers, five assistant principals, and one principal out of the district. The determination of whether the personnel function in the schools would reside with the local governing board or remain with the city was at stake, and in the end greater power of appointment and dismissal did remain with the city board and the teachers' union.[4]

Despite the fact that the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district was forced to function under ambiguous guidelines set by the Board of Education and strong opposition from the teachers' union and supervisory associations, the district did develop an experiment including many of the elements of community control. It was these elements of community participation that many large city school systems looked to in Ocean Hill to see if they should duplicate the experiment to remedy their own educational ills.

To begin to determine some of the effects of community participation in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district, the Institute for Community Studies at Queens College of the City University of New York conducted a survey in cooperation with the National Opinion Research Center in the winter of 1970. The survey encompassed interviews with 214 mothers from 6 of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools, P.S. 137, 144, 155, 178, I.S. 55, and J.H.S. 271; a random sample of 50 mothers was taken from each of these schools.

The overriding objective of the survey was to see what happens in a school district where there is community participation. With respect to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district the study was aimed at finding out what the attitudes of the parents were towards community involvement, whether they participated in school affairs and were knowledgeable about school matters, their feelings of efficacy towards influencing education in the district, their attitudes towards local control and their attitudes towards the schools.

Whether the experiment was a success in terms of community participation cannot be determined solely by this survey, for as indicated, Ocean Hill operated, at times, under extremely adverse conditions. Nevertheless, the underlying success or failure of community participation in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration project can only be determined at such time as the district is compared with other school districts of similar characteristics.

Socio-Economic Characteristics and Background of the Parents

Ocean Hill-Brownsville is located in a socio-economically deprived area of Brooklyn. Of the 214 parents surveyed, 41 per cent had total family incomes of $3,000-$4,999 per annum, while 16 per cent reported total earnings of under $3,000, 24 per cent earned between $5,000 and $6,999, and only 14 per cent of this group reported their

[4] Maurice R. Berube and Marilyn Gittell, eds., *Confrontation at Ocean Hill-Brownsville* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1969), pp. 3-16.

annual family income at $7,000 or more. The 1960 U.S. Census reported the median family income in the district ranging between $3,000-$5,100. Among the parents surveyed the average family had 4 children under the age of 18 living in the household.

Compared with 57 per cent of the total respondents earning less than $5,000 per annum, 52 per cent born in the North had family incomes of less than $5,000; 62 per cent of the parents born in the South earned that amount; and 67 per cent of the parents born in Puerto Rico reported total family incomes of less than $5,000 although none of the Puerto Ricans earned incomes under the poverty level of $3,000.

The formal education level in the district is low (see Table 1); 72 per cent of the parents indicated that they did not have an opportunity to get as much education as they would have liked and only 26 per cent did. Twenty-six per cent received an 8th grade education or less, 44 per cent completed the 9th-11th grades, 25 per cent attained a high school diploma, and only 3 per cent attended some college with 2 per cent of the respondents holding college degrees.

These results confirm the positive correlation attributed by social scientists to income and education, as the coefficient of the correlation is .23 at the 1 per cent level of significance.

A predominant 80 per cent black, 16 per cent Puerto Rican, and 3 per cent white population make up the racial composition of the respondents surveyed in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district. This sample compares with the average 73 per cent black, 24 per cent Puerto Rican, and 3 per cent white student population in the district from 1967-1968.[8]

Only 14 per cent of the respondents were born in the North, whereas a greater 67 per cent were born in the South, 15 per cent in Puerto Rico and 4 per cent in Other; 29 per cent of the group claimed that they resided in the North up to the age of 16; 54 per cent resided in the South up to that age; 13 per cent in Puerto Rico, and 4 per cent in Other. Of the parents born in the South, 13 per cent grew up in the North.

[8] *New York City School Fact Book* (Flushing, N. Y.: Institute for Community Studies, Queens College, 1969), p. 210.

TABLE 1

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTS SURVEYED
(In per cents)

Race/Ethnic	
White	3
Black	80
Puerto Rican	16
Oriental	0
Level of Education	
8th grade or less	26
9th-11th grade	44
High School	25
Some College	3
College Graduate	2
Income	
Under $3,000	16
$3,000-$4,999	41
$5,000-$6,999	24
$7,000 or more	14
Birthplace	
North	14
South	67
Puerto Rico	15
Other	4
Residence up to Age 16	
North	29
South	54
Puerto Rico	13
Other	4

The group appears to be fairly mobile as 15 per cent of the parents lived in the district for less than 1 year; 35 per cent lived there 1 year but less than 4 years; 9 per cent resided in the district 4 years but less than 5 years; 24 per cent of the respondents lived in Ocean Hill-Brownsville more than 10 years. And 50 per cent of the respondents moved into the district during the time of the experiment.

All of the parents interviewed have children in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools. Sixty-four per cent of the parents have one to three children in the public schools, 29 per cent have four or five, and 7 per cent have six to ten children in the schools. Only 15 per cent of these respondents had a child attending a public school in New York City where most of the children were white, whereas an overwhelming 84 per cent had children who attended mostly black schools all of their lives.

Of the respondents answering the question: "Who do you think receives a better education in New York City public schools—black or white children, or do they all receive the same education?", 64 per cent assumed that white children receive a better education, 28 per cent thought that black and white children receive the same education, and 2 per cent thought that black children get a better education.

Negative Attitudes in the City Towards the Ocean Hill-Brownsville School District

Experiments often create curiosity, hostility, and criticism on the part of those individuals outside of the experiment, especially when they are not fully knowledgeable about the experiment. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration project was no exception; it was a source of criticism and negative feeling on the part of many groups in New York City who thought that extremists would take over the school district and teach only black history and revolution; fears about racism and black separatism began to prevail in the city in connection with Ocean Hill.

These accusations continued as groups in the city "began to fan the flames of racial fears," and "increasingly harped on 'extremism,' 'the militants' and 'black power.'" [6] But, according to the responses in the survey, these fears were unwarranted because that attitude was not prevalent in the community.

When the parents in the survey were asked: "If you had your choice, would you rather have your (child/children) taught mostly by black teachers, mostly by white teachers, or doesn't it make any difference to you one way or the other?", overwhelmingly, 85 per cent of the respondents said that it made no difference to them. Of the group, 11 per cent preferred black teachers and 3 per cent preferred white teachers.

The teaching of black history and Afro-American studies in the public schools in the district brought a response by 51 per cent of the respondents who felt that too much, or about the right amount of this subject was being taught; 36 per cent thought that too little black history was being taught in the schools and 11 per cent were not sure.

In terms of the curricula in black history in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools, both Afro-American and Latin American studies centers were created in the district which provided "teacher training, adult education courses and resource material on the nature of the black and Puerto Rican contribution to the American culture." [7]

Parents' Evaluation of Problems in the Neighborhood

Studies have concluded that the problem of housing will be the most crucial area of social conflict in the 1960's and 1970's, and that obtaining "adequate housing is a serious problem" for all blacks in the New York region. Furthermore, these studies have related inadequate housing and slum conditions to "social delinquency." In addi-

[6] New York Civil Liberties Union, *The Burden of the Blame: A Report on the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Controversy* (New York: New York Civil Liberties Union, 1968).
[7] Carol Wielk, "Educational Progress at Ocean Hill," *Community*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (Flushing, N. Y.: Institute for Community Studies, Queens College, May, 1969), 3.

tion, they state that the schools are of special interest to blacks and Puerto Ricans since they provide one of the means through which these two groups can better themselves economically.[8]

When the parents were asked which they thought were the three biggest problems facing people like themselves in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, they ranked housing and slums first; crime, robberies, and vandalism second; and addiction and dope to be the third most crucial problem. Asked which one is the most serious, they rated housing and slums as the most important (see Table 2).

Although schools and education were highly emphasized and given public notice in the district, among the choices they listed education as the fifth biggest problem, and fourth as the most serious. In a survey conducted in December 1968, parents in Ocean Hill-Brownsville responded similarly by ranking crime, robberies and vandalism as the biggest problem they faced in their neighborhood; this was followed by housing and slums, and by better schools and education.[9]

TABLE 2

THREE BIGGEST PROBLEMS FACING PEOPLE IN OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE

(In per cents) (In rank order)

Problem	Three Problems*	Most Serious	(Rank Order)
Housing, slums	42	29	1
Crime, robberies, vandalism	40	22	3
Addiction, dope	29	24	2
Rats, roaches	23	8	5
Schools, education	21	11	4
Condition of the streets, garbage collection	17	2	6
Jobs, employment	12	2	7
The way police behave	6	.5	8
Prejudice, discrimination	3	0	10
Other	0	.5	9

* Total is more than 100 per cent because respondents were asked to choose three problems.

The primary concerns of people living in this poverty area continue to center around their personal well-being, as the physical conditions of housing and streets in Ocean Hill-Brownsville are dilapidated and dirty.

[8] Oscar Handlin, *The Newcomers: Negroes and Puerto Ricans in a Changing Metropolis*, Anchor Books (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1959), pp. 62-102.
[9] Bert E. Swanson, *Decision-Making in the Schools—Desegregation-Decentralization Controversies*, Final Report (Bronxville, N. Y.: Center for Continuing Education and Community Studies, 1969), p. 120.

THE OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT: ON PARTICIPATION AND KNOWLEDGE

Community control has become an increasingly popular notion among blacks and minority group citizens in large cities. Much of this desire for community participation has developed as a result of a growing lack of confidence in the urban institutions to meet the demands and needs of the citizenry.

Specialists in urban education consider parent and community participation as a positive link to both the participants and the system. It brings the parents closer to the schools and may place them in a situation where they share responsibility for the education process. Moreover, through participation, parents should gain a better understanding of the intricacies and problems of the professional educator.[20]

The implications of parent involvement in education go beyond the schools for it gives them the opportunity to become a part of the larger democratic process. Participatory democracy can be an educational process for the participant; one can hypothesize that in a community-run school district such as Ocean Hill-Brownsville, parents participate and are encouraged to participate because they feel closer to the institution, and to some extent become more knowledgeable through this involvement.

In determining degrees of political involvement political theoreticians have developed numerous frameworks and categories within which to measure participation. Milbrath, for example, has constructed four categories in a "hierarchy of political involvement." His elevating scale of participation includes:

1) apathetics;

2) spectator activities:
   exposing oneself to political stimuli,
   voting,
   initiating a political discussion,
   attempting to talk another into voting a certain way,
   wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car;

3) transitional activities:
   contacting a public official or a political leader,
   making a monetary contribution to a party or candidate,
   attending a political meeting or rally;and

[20] Mario D. Fantini, "Alternatives for Urban School Reform," *Harvard Educational Review*, XXXVIII (Winter, 1968), 160-75.

4) gladiatorial activities:
contributing time in a political campaign,
becoming an active member in a political party,
attending a caucus or a strategy n eeting,
soliciting political funds,
being a candidate for office,
holding public and party office.[11]

While many of these categories of participation can be used in connection with this survey, many of the definitions will have to take on broader meaning and scope, and new categories will have to be added in order to demonstrate the influence of community control on participation in an experiment such as the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration project.

Participation

Participation in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district can possibly be measured in such intangible terms as a decrease in alienation towards the local school system in contrast with the period before it was run by a community elected board. An awareness, interest and knowledge of school matters can also be a measurement of local participation in Ocean Hill.

In any case, the survey shows that the parents did participate, to some extent, in certain areas of school affairs, and in other areas did not participate to the same degree. One might conjecture that the amount of efficacy they felt towards the district determined the type and extent of their involvement.

Studies have shown that parent associations in poverty areas are weak.[12] When asked, however, about participation in the schools, such as: "Do you belong to the Parents Association in your (child's/children's) school(s)?", 36 per cent of the parents surveyed in Ocean Hill-Brownsville said that they did belong (see Table 3). Some 55 per cent of the respondents indicated that they attended one to four Parents Association meetings last year, with 45 per cent of them attending none, and 18 per cent attending more than four.

In another category, when questioned about personal contact with the Ocean Hill-Brownsville leaders, 10 per cent of the parents claimed that they had talked personally with the unit administrator; 13 per cent of the same group said that they talked personally with a member of the local governing board. Their attitudes towards these local leaders in contrast with city-wide officials shows greater confidence in the community school district.

An overwhelming 86 per cent of the parents said that they had visited a school in the district in the last year. Although this study has no control group, other informal

[11] Lester W. Milbrath, *Political Participation: How and Why Do People Get Involved in Politics?* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1965), p. 18.
[12] United Parents Associations, *Self-Help Program in Parent Education* (August, 1967), p. iv.

TABLE 3

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL AFFAIRS
(In per cents)

Participated in a boycott or demonstration at a school in the district in the past year or two	
Yes	10
No	89
Not sure	1
Membership in the Parents Association	
Belong	36
Don't belong	64
Not sure	0
Number of times attended meetings in the last year	
One	7
Two	13
Three	10
Four	7
More than four	18
None	45
Visited child's school in the district in the last year	
Yes	86
No	13
Not sure	0

studies and interviews indicate that an increase in parent participation develops when parents become close to and interested in the schools.[13] Before the creation of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district few parents ever visited or were welcomed in the schools. This increase in participation has been noted by teachers who were in the schools prior to the district.[14] Furthermore, several studies claim that there is a positive correlation between parent participation and student achievement in the schools. In 1968, the parents in Ocean Hill-Brownsville responded similarly to a survey when asked about their participation in the Parents Association and visits to the schools.[15]

Even when using the standard criteria for participation, voter participation, more than 20 per cent of the eligible voters in the community district participated in the local school board election. One-third of those interviewed voted in a city-wide election

[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Participant observer's interviews with teachers, January-June, 1970.
[15] Swanson, *op. cit.*

for Mayor in November 1969. In a larger school district election in 1970 (encompassing the Ocean Hill district) only 4.9 per cent of the citizens voted. These figures would indicate wide interests and participation in the experiment in community control.

One can conclude from the survey that participation was not activist oriented, since only 10 per cent of the parents indicated that they had participated in a boycott or demonstration at a school in the district.

The parents surveyed in the district were asked several questions about their general participation in community affairs. In the responses, 30 per cent of the group acknowledged the fact that they belonged to some type of community organization or association. This figure is somewhat lower than that for membership in the Parents Association (a school organization). Of the 64 people who belonged to a community organization, 48 per cent of the parents belonged to a religious or church group, followed closely by 44 per cent who are involved in some welfare rights group.

This latter fact has significant implications for political behavior since the church has traditionally served as an important part of the life in black communities.[16] In researching the role of religion among racial and ethnic subgroups in the United States, Donald Young noted:

> One function which a minority religion may serve is that of reconciliation with inferior status and its discriminatory consequences. . . . The Christianity of the Negro, in spite of appreciable encouragement of verbal criticism of the existing order, has emphasized acceptance of present troubles in the knowledge of better times to come in the life hereafter.[17]

But with nearly equal participation in welfare rights groups as religious and church groups, one can surmise that the church is no longer the center of life in this Northern urban ghetto.[18] Blacks are no longer accepting the lot which is handed to them. The high percentage of people in the community receiving welfare grants (31 per cent)[19] and the deteriorated living conditions in the neighborhood have forced them to face the stark realities which beset them and to transfer some of their efforts to action in this area.

This survey can also serve to reaffirm two familiar hypotheses relating to participation. Social scientists have found in many studies that both income and education are positively correlated with political participation.[20] As Table 4 indicates, when the respondents were broken down into low income, higher income (under $5,000, over $5,000) and low education, higher education (below 6th grade to 11th grade, high school to college), the parents with the higher income and education showed greater degrees of participation than their counterparts with low income and education. How-

[16] James Q. Wilson, *Negro Politics: The Search for Leadership* (New York: The Free Press, 1960), p. 129.
[17] Donald Young, *American Minority Peoples* (New York: Harper, 1937), p. 204, quoted in Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1957), p. 43.
[18] Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 129.
[19] Carol A. Wielk, "The Ocean Hill-Brownsville School Project: A Profile," *Community Issues*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Flushing, N. Y.: Institute for Community Studies, Queens College, February, 1969), 4.
[20] Milbrath, *op. cit.*, pp. 120-24.

ever, these figures can serve as a rationale for having a community school district since there is less disparity between participation in low income and education categories and higher income and education categories in the areas of participation within the district as compared with city-wide participation (the mayoral election).

In terms of community participation the survey shows that there were degrees of involvement, some high, in school matters. And one could conjecture that the parents interviewed did feel efficacious about the schools. But, the significance of participation in a community school district will have to rely on additional studies to be conclusive.

TABLE 4
COMPARISON OF PARTICIPATION AMONG THE RESPONDENTS IN DIFFERENT INCOME AND EDUCATION LEVELS
(In per cents)

Area of Participation	Income		Education	
	Under $5,000	Over $5,000	Below 6th Grade to 11th Grade	High School to College
Membership in Parents Association	34	43	28	56
Talked personally with the unit administrator	8	15	6	19
Talked personally with a member of the local governing board	11	16	10	20
Participated in a boycott or demonstration in the schools	6	18	7	17
Visited the schools last year	85	92	82	97
Voted in the last mayoral election	26	50	26	48

Knowledge

Advocates of community control of education believe that the efficaciousness the community develops towards the schools will lead them to become participants in the education process. It is through this involvement that the participants are assumed to become more knowledgeable concerning school matters.

Actually, a Gallup survey in 1969 indicated that there was widespread "citizen ignorance about schools."[21] In this survey several questions were asked the Ocean Hill-Brownsville respondents to learn the extent of their knowledge about the district and the schools.

[21] *How the Nation Views the Public Schools* (Melbourne, Fla.: Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Information and Services Division, 1969), cited by Cunningham, *op. cit.*, p. 334.

In reference to the district, the parents were asked to expand on: "What do you think is going to happen to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Governing Board in the fall when the new school districts come into existence?" Fifty-three percent of the respondents made a judgment with some extent of knowledge about the district (see Table 5), while 2 per cent gave wrong information, and 42 per cent responded that they did not know what was going to happen. In addition, 14 per cent of the group surveyed, on being asked if they knew the names of any members of the local governing board, said yes; 85 per cent were not familiar with the names of governing board members.

TABLE 5

PARENTS' PREDICTION OF THE FUTURE OF THE OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE GOVERNING BOARD IN THE FALL WHEN THE NEW SCHOOL DISTRICTS COME INTO EXISTENCE
(In per cents) (Open-ended question)

	Per Cent	*(N)*
Better	3	(6)
Worse	5	(10)
Will be done away with	29	(62)
Hopes that it will continue	10	(22)
Will remain the same	6	(12)
Incorrect response	2	(14)
Don't know	42	(90)

In connection with the schools the respondents were informed that the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board and the unit administrator started new programs in the schools; 30 per cent of the parents were familiar with the programs while 60 per cent of the group were not. Of the 65 parents who said they were familiar with some of the programs, the best known program seemed to be Headstart, with 52 per cent of the mothers in the group familiar with the programs acknowledging that they knew about it; 40 per cent of the parents in this group were familiar with Project Read and 23 per cent of the respondents knew about the Bi-lingual Program at P.S. 155; another 18 per cent of the parents knowledgeable about the programs knew both about the Home Reading Program and the Mathematics Labs.

The parents interviewed who represented the four elementary schools in the survey showed greater knowledge of the programs than those having children in the intermediate school and junior high school. Approximately one-third of the respondents in three of the elementary schools were familiar with the programs, and in P.S. 137 nearly one-half of the mothers knew about the programs. In the intermediate school and junior high school about one-fifth of the parents indicated that they were familiar with the programs. The respondents indicated greater familiarity where more programs were present in their schools. The programs listed for the intermediate school and junior high school were individualized programs rather than those reaching a larger segment of the student body.

In light of the results of the survey, one may have to conclude that the respondents are limited in their knowledge of the district and the schools. The study did not really indicate high degrees of knowledge in the areas surveyed, except that knowledge of programs seemed widespread among those who had direct experience with them.

THE OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT: AN EXPERIMENT IN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

The proponents of community control assume that community participation, defined as school boards locally elected and directly accountable to the electorate, would produce more positive feelings from the community about schools and school leaders. It should also encourage greater feelings of efficacy among the citizenry.

Although the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration project was never given complete autonomy in its authority and operated under ambiguous guidelines, it was an experiment in community participation of a more limited type. This survey shows that even in the short life of the experiment, though plagued with crises, it did produce some of the objectives stated above.

Evaluation of the District and Parental Influence

The results of the survey show that the community developed strong feelings of efficacy pertaining to the schools. Of the 214 parents interviewed, four-fifths believed that the community had more influence, or the same amount in running the schools compared with a few years before the creation of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district, and less than one-tenth of the respondents thought the community had about the same influence (see Table 6).

TABLE 6
PARENTS' EVALUATION OF THE DISTRICT
(In per cents)

The Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools in comparison to the way they were before they became part of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville District	
Better	32
Worse	17
About the same	40
Not sure	10
Feelings about possible abolition of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville School District	
Pleased	6
Unhappy	52
No difference	25
Not sure	16
Influence people have in running the schools in the district as compared with a few years ago, before the creation of the district	
More influence	65
Less influence	8
Same	16
Not sure	10

The respondents answered rather affirmatively on questions pertaining to the district. For example, when asked to evaluate the schools in the district in comparison to the way they were before the creation of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district, 72 per cent rated the schools better or about the same while only 17 per cent thought that they were worse and 10 per cent were not sure (see Table 6).

Some of the parents surveyed may have indicated a degree of attachment to the district because in response to the question: "If the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district was done away with, would you be pleased, would you be unhappy, or would it make no difference to you?", 52 per cent answered that they would be unhappy, 25 per cent responded that it made no difference and only 6 per cent were pleased at the prospect of the abolition of the district.

Although the respondents felt that they had a considerable amount of influence in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district, they wanted more. For instance, 49 per cent of these parents felt that the community in Ocean Hill-Brownsville had too much influence or the right amount of influence in running the schools in the district; 44 per cent of the same group felt that they had too little influence. Considering that their influence was local and not city-wide, the respondents showed stronger feelings of influence in their community schools than they assumed parents had throughout the rest of New York City. Of those surveyed, 76 per cent thought that parents should have more to

say about what goes on in the city schools. Another 16 per cent felt that they should assume the same influence as now, and 5 per cent of the group felt that the parents should have less influence; the remaining 2 per cent of them were not sure.

While the parents in the survey indicated a desire for greater community influence, many of them felt that school board members should have special qualifications. Among the respondents 56 per cent of the group thought that people should have special qualifications to serve on school boards like the one in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, whereas 40 per cent of the respondents thought that ordinary parents should serve and 4 per cent of them were not sure. Even though 76 per cent of the members of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board hold non-professional occupations,[22] it is curious that 56 per cent of the parents surveyed still feel that school board members should hold special qualifications.

The parents felt that they had their greatest influence in determining what was taught in the schools in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, with 47 per cent of them thinking they had too much or the right amount of influence in this area; 49 per cent of the group thought that they had too little influence. They also perceived themselves as having more influence in hiring teachers and administrators than removing them. Parents' responses on this question may have reflected the controversy involved in removing teachers in the district when 10 per cent of them responded that they were *not sure* about how much influence parents in the district have in regard to *removing* teachers and administrators. Of the group, 37 per cent indicated having greater influence in hiring teachers and administrators, and 34 per cent said that they had too much or the right amount of influence in removing teachers and administrators.

Educational Leaders in the District

To fulfill the most fundamental requisites for community participation, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration project elected its own local school board.

The first major assignment that the governing board undertook was to hire a unit administrator (district superintendent) to take on the responsibilities of education in the district. They hired Rhody McCoy, who had experience in the New York City school system and was an acting principal in a ghetto school.

Probably the most crucial change affecting the schools was the appointment of new principals. The new principals were designated demonstration school principals by the Board of Education and State Commissioner of Education. Although they did not meet the requirements of the New York City Board of Examiners, they all held state certification. Control over personnel was constantly challenged by outsiders, but the greatest difficulty came when the New York State Supreme Court ruled in favor of the Council of Supervisory Associations to withdraw the category of demonstration school principal in the three demonstration projects. The decision was, however, reversed in the Court of Appeals the following year.[23]

The unit administrator also selected his own district office staff. Among these appointments were those of an assistant administrative director, business manager, early childhood supervisor, and teacher trainers. In addition several teachers were given cur-

[22] *Community*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Flushing, N. Y.: Institute for Community Studies, Queens College, Spring/Summer, 1970), 3.
[23] Berube and Gittell, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

riculum assignments and worked in coordination with the district office. Many of the assignments were new to a district office, and were developed with the idea that they would help to realize the goals in the district.

With these comparatively extreme changes in personnel selection, measurement of community attitudes towards these new educational leaders is particularly relevant.

In an overview of school officials in the district (see Table 7) parents gave the principals in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville project the highest ranking with a highly significant 75 per cent of the respondents rating the principals as doing an excellent or pretty good job. Generally, the parents ranked the local governing board and the unit administrator very highly. Significantly, the city Board of Education in contrast was rated rather poorly.

The general evaluation given to the educational leaders in Ocean Hill-Brownsville by the parents in this survey is more positive than the assessment given by the respondents in a Harris survey of late 1968. Perhaps, in the time span of more than a year, the community encountered positive experiences with the local leaders which led them to respond more affirmatively.

TABLE 7
PARENTS' EVALUATION OF SCHOOL OFFICIALS
(In per cents)

Local governing board	
Positive †	57
Fair	33
Poor	2
Not sure	7
Unit administrator	
Positive †	58
Only fair	23
Poor	6
Not sure	13
Principals	
Positive †	75
Only fair	15
Poor	6
Not sure	3
Board of Education	
Positive *	50
Poor	27
Very poor	1
Not sure	12

Positive: * Respondents gave rating of "very good" or "good."
† Respondents gave rating of "excellent" or "pretty good."

The Harris survey indicated that 31 per cent of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville respondents gave the local governing board a positive rating; in this survey 57 per cent of the parents rated the board positively. In the Harris survey 29 per cent evaluated the unit administrator positively; in this survey 58 per cent gave that rating. The principals received a positive evaluation by 40 per cent of the respondents in the Harris survey; 75 per cent gave a positive rating in this survey. Even the city Board of Education fared better this time, with 50 per cent of the respondents giving a positive rating as compared with 24 per cent in the Harris survey.[24] This could be a possible indication that the community feels more positively about things in general now.

The Principals

Several questions can be considered in providing more specific evaluations of educational leaders in the district. As indicated earlier, three-quarters of the parents gave an excellent or pretty good rating to the job the principals were doing (see Table 8). And in response to doing something about a problem in the school if contacted, again a very high 78 per cent of the parents surveyed believed that the principals would try to do something; 15 per cent thought that they would listen and avoid doing anything, and 4 per cent said that the principals would ignore the problem.

TABLE 8
PARENTS' EVALUATION OF PRINCIPALS IN THE OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE SCHOOLS
(In per cents)

Rating the job the principals are doing:	
Positive	75
Only fair	15
Poor	6
Not sure	3
Principals' response to doing something about a problem in the school if contacted:	
Try to do something	78
Listen, avoid doing anything	15
Ignore	4
Not sure	3

Positive: Respondents rated principals "excellent" or "pretty good."

The Local Governing Board

In reviewing the job that the local governing board was doing, 57 per cent gave a rating of excellent or pretty good, while 33 per cent rated them fair and only 2 per cent gave a rating of poor. When asked what they thought the local governing board would do about demands of parents in the district, half answered that the local board would do what most district parents want; 30 per cent answered what only some parents

[24] Swanson, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

want, and 15 per cent thought that the local board would act on its own. In another action question, a significant 76 per cent of the respondents felt that the board would try to do something about a problem in the school if contacted while 15 per cent thought that they would listen and avoid doing anything; an insignificant 2 per cent said that the local governing board would choose to ignore the problem (see Table 9).

TABLE 9
PARENTS' EVALUATION OF THE LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD
(In per cents)

Rating the job the local governing board is doing:	
Positive	57
Fair	33
Poor	2
Not sure	7
Local governing board's action on what parents in the district want:	
What most district parents want	50
What only some parents want	30
Acts on its own	15
Not sure	5
Local governing board's response to doing something about a problem in the school if contacted:	
Try to do something	76
Listen, avoid doing anything	15
Ignore	2
Not sure	7

Positive: Respondents rated the local governing board as "excellent" or "pretty good."

The fact that the parents surveyed felt so positively about the local governing board is an indication that the board members elected by the community were being perceived as either meeting the expectations of their constituency and/or were more responsive to their demands.

The Unit Administrator

Rhody McCoy received a positive rating of 58 per cent in the job he was doing as unit administrator, while 23 per cent thought that he was doing an only fair job, and 6 per cent thought that he was doing a poor job. A little more than three-fifths were under the impression that the unit administrator informed the community about what was happening in the district, while a little more than one-fifth thought that he was not keeping the community informed. In ranking the areas in which the unit administrator allocated most of his time, 31 per cent thought that his time was devoted to improving education in the district followed by organizing the community to support the district, making himself well known and dealing with the city administration (see Table 10). When asked the same question about the local school board as to

TABLE 10
PARENTS' EVALUATION OF THE UNIT ADMINISTRATOR
(In per cents)

Rating the job Rhody McCoy is doing as unit administrator	
Positive	58
Only fair	23
Poor	6
Not sure	13
Has the unit administrator kept the people informed about what is happening in the district?	
Yes	62
No	22
Not sure	15
Area in which the unit administrator has devoted most of his time (in rank order)	
Improving education in the district	31
Organizing the community to support the district	24
Making himself well known	23
Dealing with the city administration	8
Not sure	7
Unit administrator's action on what parents in the district want	
What most district parents want	45
What only some parents want	21
Acts on its own	26
Not sure	8
Unit administrator's response to doing something about a problem in the school if contacted	
Try to do something	72
Listen, avoid doing anything	17
Ignore	3
Not sure	7

Positive: Respondents rated the unit administrator as "excellent" or "pretty good."

what action would be taken on the demands of parents in the district, 45 per cent responded that the unit administrator would do what most of the parents wanted; 21 per cent what only some wanted, and 26 per cent said that he would act on his own. A high 72 per cent thought that the unit administrator would try to do something about a problem in the school if contacted, while 17 per cent answered that he would listen and avoid doing anything; only 3 per cent responded that he would ignore the problem.

The Board of Education

In its general assessment of the New York City Board of Education (see Table 11), half the respondents gave a positive rating to the job the Board was doing, while 38 per cent were negative, and the remaining 12 per cent were not sure. Becoming more specific about rating the Board of Education with respect to its work in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, the same respondents lowered their assessment, with some 34 per cent of the people believing that the Board tried to make the Ocean Hill-Brownsville project a success; 38 per cent thought they did very little one way or the other, and 15 per cent of those interviewed answered that the Board of Education tried to make the school district fail.

Compared to the evaluation of the other educational leaders mentioned so far, only a little more than one-fifth of the respondents thought that the Board of Education would

TABLE 11
PARENTS' EVALUATION OF THE NEW YORK CITY BOARD OF EDUCATION
(In per cents)

Rating the Board of Education	
Positive	50
Negative	38
Not sure	12
Rating the Board of Education's relationship to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district	
Tried to make it a success	34
Did very little one way or the other	38
Tried to make it fail	15
Not sure	13
Board of Education's action on what parents in the district want	
What most district parents want	22
What only some parents want	24
Acts on its own	47
Not sure	7
Board of Education's response to doing something about a problem in the school if contacted	
Try to do something	34
Listen, avoid doing anything	36
Ignore	25
Not sure	5

Positive: Respondents gave a rating of "very good" or "good."
Negative: Respondents gave a rating of "poor" or "very poor."

meet the demands of most parents in the district, and 47 per cent thought that the Board would act on its own; another 24 per cent expressed the view that the Board of Education would do what only some parents want. When compared with the 76 per cent of the respondents who believed that the local governing board would try to do something about a problem in the district if contacted, of the same group only 34 per cent of the parents said that the Board of Education would try to do something.

TABLE 12

PARENTS' EVALUATION OF TEACHERS IN THE OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE SCHOOLS

(In per cents)*

Teachers	
Positive	77
Negative	21
Not sure	2
Teachers' interest in children	
Very interested	33
Somewhat interested	52
Hardly interested at all	14
Not sure	1
Teachers' understanding of problems facing children in the district	
Positive	60
Negative	36
Not sure	3
Teachers' response to doing something about a problem in the school if contacted	
Try to do something	83
Listen, avoid doing anything	11
Ignore	4
Not sure	1
Parent-teacher relations	
Positive	68
Negative	25
Not sure	7
Student-teacher relations	
Positive	64
Negative	32
Not sure	3

Positive: Respondents rated the teachers as "very good" or "good."
Negative: Respondents rated the teachers as "poor" or "very poor."

*85%-90% of the teachers in the district were hired by the local governing board and the unit administrator and the remainder chose to remain in the district.

With respect to the objectives of a community control district, the survey shows that the community developed positive feelings about its school leaders, and, further, they felt quite efficacious about influencing action in the district.

The Teachers

Of all the educational leaders evaluated by the parents, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville teachers fared the best in the general job assessment (see Table 12), with 77 per cent of the respondents giving the teachers a positive rating.[25] A drop more than one-fifth of the group gave the teachers a negative rating. When questioned, the parents felt that the teachers showed a definite interest in the children, as three-fifths of the respondents thought that the teachers had an understanding of the problems facing children in the district and 85 per cent of them thought that the teachers were either very interested or somewhat interested in the children. Furthermore, 83 per cent of the group were convinced that the teachers in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district would try to do something about a problem in the school if contacted. In addition, an average of two-thirds of these same people gave a positive rating to both parent-teacher relations and student-teacher relations.

The teachers also fared overwhelmingly better in this survey, with 77 per cent of the parents responding positively towards the teachers compared with 38 per cent in the Harris survey.[26] Although the positive attitude about teachers by the parents in this survey may reflect, to a certain extent, a respect for all teachers, observers in the district have sensed as a major impression that the attitude of the teachers is that the children in the district are educable. Contrasting the responses in 1970 with December 1968 indicates that the teachers hired by the district were more accepted. Whether they could translate this positive feeling into effective teaching was not determined, but this positive reaction of parents probably reflects their confidence that the teachers will at least make an effort in that direction.

Children in ghettos often experience situations where they are assigned a teacher who does not want to be in that school, is unable to obtain a transfer and who cares little about what effect their attitude has upon the students. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville experiment attracted, for various reasons, many teachers anxious to work in the district and willing to experiment with new educational programs. Their experience varied from that of the usual New York City teachers, with many of them coming from other parts of the country and having varied backgrounds.

OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE: PARENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE SCHOOLS

There have been no studies offering conclusive evidence that community control of schools yields educational achievement. But, there are no experiments in this area which have been in existence long enough to justify such a conclusion. Certainly, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experiment was not the ideal model to test that hypothesis because of the crises and confusion prevalent throughout its short history.

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[25] The local governing board and the unit administrator hired 85 to 90 per cent of the teachers in the district over the three-year history.
[26] Swanson, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

This survey does offer some meaningful evidence. It demonstrates that the parents developed positive feelings towards school facilities and the general school environment. It is possible that the efficacy they felt about influence in the district and towards the educational leaders was transformed into their attitudes about the schools.

Education

The respondents were asked a few questions pertaining to specific subject areas taught in the schools (see Table 13) to ascertain their attitudes concerning the education of their children.

TABLE 13

PARENTS' EVALUATION OF CURRICULUM
IN THE OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE DISTRICT
(In per cents)

Teaching arithmetic in the schools	
Positive	79
Negative	19
Not sure	2
Teaching reading in the schools	
Positive	59
Negative	40
Not sure	1

Positive: Respondents gave rating of "very good" or "good."

Negative: Respondents gave rating of "poor" or "very poor."

In rating the job that the schools were doing in teaching arithmetic, four-fifths of the respondents thought the schools were doing a positive job and only one-fifth thought they were doing a poor or very poor job.

In rating the job the schools were doing in teaching reading, nearly three-fifths of the parents judged the performance positively, while two-fifths held a negative view.

The Schools

In considering some of the problems confronting the Ocean Hill-Brownsville schools the respondents were asked to choose the two most important things they thought ought to be done in the schools and if they thought anything was being done about them (see Table 14). Among the choices the parents thought that reducing overcrowding and training neighborhood people as teacher's aides were the two most important things that could be done to improve the schools; this was followed closely

by the need for encouraging parents to come into the schools. The fact that the parents felt that neighborhood people should be trained as teacher's aides could possibly reflect a wider function they are assigning to the schools, that of providing jobs for the community. It is also interesting that the parents perceived the schools to be overcrowded because according to New York City standards, they were not overcrowded. This can probably be explained by the fact that throughout most of their lives the children attended schools in the city which were overcrowded [27] (85 per cent of the respondents claimed that their children always attended mostly black schools), and the parents were accustomed to relating to this problem. Furthermore, the schools were overcrowded when the district started.

TABLE 14

TWO MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO BE DONE IN THE OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE SCHOOLS

(In per cents) (In rank order)

	What Is Being Done	
	Positive	*Negative*
Reduce overcrowding	22	29
Training neighborhood people as teacher's aides	38	8
Encourage parents to come into schools	36	7
Try out new programs	26	8
Provide teaching in Spanish	10	4

Positive: Respondents answered that a "great deal" or "something" was being done to improve the particular condition in the school.

Negative: Respondents answered that "hardly anything" was being done to improve the particular condition in the school.

As Table 14 indicates, the greater majority of the parents believed that a great deal or something was being done to improve these particular conditions in the schools. In fact, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district has confronted or attempted to confront all of these problems. The local governing board has provided for the inclusion of paraprofessionals or teacher aides in the implementation of most new programs.

In an open-ended question the respondents were asked to expand on what they did not like about the schools in Ocean Hill-Brownsville and what they would like to see changed (see Table 15). They rated crime, robberies and fighting in schools as the most frequent complaint, which was a carry-over from the problems they saw in the neighborhood. Consistent with their responses of important things to be done in the schools, approximately one-tenth of the group listed overcrowding as a problem in the open-ended question. But 15 per cent had no complaints *at all* about the schools when they were asked.

[27] See *New York City School Fact Book, op. cit.* Board of Education figures indicate that most ghetto schools in the City are over-utilized.

Generally, when the parents were asked to evaluate items in the schools such as textbooks, school buildings, lunches, parent-teacher relations, guidance counseling, and student-teacher relations, an average of two-thirds rated these areas very good or good (see Table 16). The parents surveyed answered rather positively on all the items, with the most negative responses relating to the school buildings. Actually, of the 6 schools

TABLE 15

WHAT PARENTS DON'T LIKE ABOUT THE SCHOOLS IN OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE CHANGED

(In per cents) (Open-ended question)

	Per Cent	*(N)*
Crime, robberies, fighting in schools	22	(47)
Discipline	20	(43)
Other	17	(37)
Teachers	11	(23)
Lunches	9	(20)
More homework	9	(20)
Overcrowded	9	(19)
Poor quality of education, schools	8	(18)
Narcotics, dope	7	(16)
Schools dirty, bad condition	7	(15)
Poor parent-teacher relationship	6	(12)
Poor teacher-student relationship	4	(9)
Prejudice, discrimination	3	(7)
No complaints	15	(32)

TABLE 16

PARENTS' EVALUATION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES, SERVICES AND TEACHER RELATIONS

(In per cents)

	Positive	*Negative*	*Not Sure*
Textbooks used in the schools in district	68	21	7
School buildings	64	35	.5
Guidance counseling	57	20	21
Lunches at school	69	27	2
Parent-teacher relations	68	25	7
Student-teacher relations	64	32	3

Positive: Respondents answered "very good" or "good."
Negative: Respondents answered "poor" or "very poor."

in this survey, the 4 elementary schools were built in the early 1900's and the intermediate school and junior high school were both built in the 1960's.[28]

One might conjecture that this community is concerned with their physical surroundings and automatically transfers this concern to the school buildings. As mentioned earlier, the parents in this survey felt that housing and slums was the biggest problem facing people in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville neighborhood.

When asked to give an open-ended answer to what they liked about the schools in Ocean Hill-Brownsville (see Table 17), one-third of the parents acknowledged the fact that they thought positively about the performance of the teachers and teacher-student relations. This is a reaffirmation of the positive feelings the parents had towards the teachers. The parents also liked the new programs and the lunches in the schools.

TABLE 17
WHAT PARENTS LIKE ABOUT THE SCHOOLS
IN OCEAN HILL-BROWNSVILLE
(In per cents) (Open-ended question)

	Per Cent	*(N)*
Teachers	34	(72)
School work, quality education, new programs	33	(71)
Lunches	19	(40)
Teacher-student relations	12	(25)
Other	11	(21)
Parent-teacher relations	6	(13)
Paraprofessionals—teacher aides, school aides	3	(7)
Not overcrowded	1	(3)
Community relations	1	(2)
Does not like anything	18	(38)

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experiment was to enable the community to make school policy, to influence the school district and to participate in school affairs. This survey attempted to examine what happens in a community school district such as Ocean Hill-Brownsville where there is participation and what the attitudes of the parents are towards local control. To a certain extent the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration project did meet many of the objectives of a community-run school district.

In terms of community participation the survey shows that the parents were active in several areas of school affairs in varying degrees. For example, 36 per cent of the

[28] *New York City School Fact Book, op. cit.*, p. 206.

respondents said that they belonged to the Parents Association, and an overwelming 86 per cent of the parents claimed that they visited a school in the district in the last year. In other categories, 10 per cent of the parents acknowledged talking personally with the unit administrator; 13 per cent of those surveyed talked personally with a member of the local governing board. When asked whether they belonged to some type of community organization or association, 30 per cent of the respondents said that they did belong.

The respondents were asked several questions to discover the extent of their knowledge about the district and the schools. They were asked what they thought was going to happen to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board in the fall when the new school districts come into existence. To this open-ended question 53 per cent of the parents answered with some extent of knowledge about the district. In addition, 30 per cent of the parents were familiar with the new programs initiated in the schools by the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board and the unit administrator.

The responses obtained in the survey suggest that the parents had feelings of efficacy about the schools because they demonstrated high degrees of participation in many areas of school affairs. The proponents of community control of education believe that through involvement the participants will become more knowledgeable concerning school matters. While the degrees of knowledge seem to be more limited than those of participation, the figures appear to be high for a ghetto area.

The results of the survey also show that the parents had strong feelings of efficacy in running the schools as four-fifths of the parents interviewed believed that they had more influence, or about the same amount in running the schools compared with a few years before the creation of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district. Nearly three-quarters of the parents thought that the schools were better or about the same in that comparison. While the respondents felt that they had a considerable amount of influence in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district, they wanted more.

The respondents in the survey seemed to have positive attitudes towards local control in the district. In an overview of the job assessment given school officials in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experiment the parents assigned positive ratings of 75 per cent to the principals, 57 per cent to the local governing board, 58 per cent to the unit administrator, and 50 per cent to the Board of Education. In general, the evaluation given to local leaders and teachers was higher than for city-wide educational leaders. This survey also offers evidence that the parents developed positive feelings toward school facilities and the school environment.

Most educators know that any experiment requires an extended amount of time to evaluate. Unfortunately, the short history of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville demonstration project does not allow for a long-term evaluation. However, this attitudinal survey shows that the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experiment, in its short existence, did fulfill many of the goals of a community control school district. The parents developed enough efficacy to participate and acquire knowledge pertaining to school matters and had confidence in their educational leaders.

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